

Members

Sen. Thomas Wyss, Chair
Sen. Allen Paul
Sen. William Alexa
Sen. Allie Craycraft
Rep. William Bailey
Rep. Claire Leuck
Rep. Robert Alderman
Rep. James Atterholt
Terry Smith
John Dahman
Jim Brown
David Miller



COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 19, 1999
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: Room 431, State House, 200 W.
Washington St.
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Thomas Wyss, Chair; Sen. Allie Craycraft; Rep. Robert Alderman; Rep. William Bailey; Rep. James Atterholt; Terry Smith; Jim Brown; David Miller.

Members Absent: Sen. William Alexa; Sen. Allen Paul; Rep. Claire Leuck; John Dahman.

Introduction

Sen. Thomas Wyss called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. He introduced commission members and provided an overview of the Commission's responsibility to examine/enhance legislation affecting veterans in Indiana. He invited William Jackson, Director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, to provide testimony on current veterans' issues.

Presentation

University Fee Remissions (HEA 1073-1999) Mr. Jackson described a meeting he had with five veterans' organizations to discuss past and future legislation under their consideration. He related their concern with HEA 1073-1999 and its cutoff date of July 1, 1999. (HEA 1073 allows fee remissions to universities for the children of veterans who served during war time.) Rep. William Bailey responded that the current cutoff date would not affect funding for those who might become eligible in the future. Sen. Wyss said that any additional needs should be brought before legislators. Mr. Jackson responded that removing the cutoff date would facilitate future use by military personnel now involved in Iraq and

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Kosovo. He added that Congress has not established a cutoff date for military benefits for personnel involved in these operations. Sen. Wyss concluded that legislators were comfortable with the current cutoff date, and that date could be changed by future legislative action, if necessary.

Randy Fairchild questioned the reference in HEA 1073 regarding receiving a campaign medal as a criteria for fee remission. He served 22 years on active duty, but did not serve directly in a "war theater" (a criteria for a campaign medal). He added that federal benefits offered for wartime service do not require service in a war theater. Military personnel serving on an American base during a war would still be eligible for war time benefits. Rep. Alderman replied that eligibility is related to the time period served. Sen. Wyss added that other language in the bill seems to cover his service.

Local Workforce Investment Boards (HEA 1652-1999) Mr. Jackson said that veterans organizations insure veteran representation on recently created local workforce investment boards, which are involved in workforce training programs. He stated that Craig Hartzer, Department of Workforce Development, indicated that federal legislation allows veterans to be appointed, but does not require it. Sen. Wyss recalled that the legislature had enacted the workforce investment legislation required by the federal Workforce Investment Act. He suggested, however, that the Commission send a resolution supporting veteran membership to each of the local boards. Diane Powers, Commission fiscal staff, stated that a Commission resolution would require approval of the Legislative Council. Jeanette Adams, attorney for the Commission, added that the Commission could recommend the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly. Sen. Wyss made a motion that the Commission ask the Legislative Council for the authority to draft a resolution to local investment boards encouraging them to have veteran representatives. The motion passed unanimously.

Veterans License Plates Mr. Jackson said that several veterans organizations have requested specialty license plates, but they have been told by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) that there is a moratorium on specialty plates. He said the status of this BMV request is unknown. He added that BMV requires a forecasted demand of at least 5,000 specialized plates before production is considered, and a special plate decal regarding veteran service is being considered as an alternative. Rep. Alderman expressed concern about the number of specialty plates now available and the difficulty in producing more. Rep. Bailey suggested that the Commission was not the proper forum for a license plate discussion.

Military Experience and Professional Licenses Mr. Jackson said that military personnel involved in professional trades (e.g., working as a barber or nurse) are currently required, upon leaving the service, to undertake civilian training to receive professional licenses, despite their military experience. He suggested that some military experience might be counted as credit toward training for licenses. He added that this could induce persons retiring from the military to settle in Indiana. Sen. Wyss stated that research compiled on this issue by Tim Tyler, Commission attorney, would be distributed for consideration at the Commission's next meeting. He remarked that this issue may cause concern among universities and the educational requirements they maintain for certain licenses. He suggested that the Commission review other states' actions in this area and invite staff from the Bureau of Professional Licensing to testify. Jim Brown, Commission member, mentioned that ATA has an airline mechanics school and that armed forces personnel might be drawn to this school if this legislation was in place. Sen. Wyss replied that military experience would be a natural fit for such jobs, but he was not sure if state licensing applied to private ATA training requirements.

Class-action Lawsuit Mr. Jackson brought to the Commission's attention a class-action lawsuit brought by "Class Act Group" (a group representing Vietnam, Korean War, and World War II veterans) against the federal government. The suit would require lifetime medical benefits be granted to military retirees based on the implied government guarantee to provide them. He stated that the Group has sought Governor O'Bannon's support. Terry Smith suggested that written support from the Governor or the Commission would become helpful part of the official record of the lawsuit. He asked if Indiana veterans organizations would be involved in the suit. Mr. Jackson could not say.

Mr. Fairchild stated that a related suit in South Carolina was recently turned down, while a Florida suit is still pending. He said that the problem lies with Medicare being substituted for military medical benefits at age 65. Mr. Jackson stated that many veterans are unaware of this substitution and do not apply for Medicare Part B or other supplementary insurance to make up for lost coverage. Stan Huseland,

speaking from the audience, stated that he had seen an old recruitment brochure in which lifetime medical benefits were implied. Mr. Jackson added that he had seen publications promising these benefits prior to 1956. Sen. Craycraft reflected that his promised General Motors lifetime medical benefits were changed after his retirement, and this corporate action was upheld by the Supreme Court.

Other Items Rep. James Atterholt announced that House Bill 1091-1999, sponsored by Rep. Gerald Torr and himself, was not having its intended effect. Under the bill, high schools are required to provide military recruiters with the names of high school graduates when these names are also provided to potential employers. He said he knew of at least 200 schools that refuse to supply any names whatsoever to avoid giving them to recruiters. He asked that this issue be considered by the Commission. Rep. Bailey said that the Commission is already on record as supporting the measure. Sen. Wyss suggested the Commission could propose additional legislation to enforce the bill's intent. Rep. Atterholt concurred that a more direct requirement was needed.

Mr. Fairchild said that Senate Bill 450-1999, which raised the amount contributed by counties from \$30 to \$100 for military grave markers, is being interpreted by counties as an optional increase. Rep. Bailey replied that the bill was not intended to be mandatory.

Next Meeting

Sen. Wyss scheduled the next meeting for September 16 at 10:00 a.m. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.